DARREL of THE BLESSED ISLES

By IRVING BACHELLER,

Author of "Eben Holden," "D'ri and I," Etc.

CHAPTER V.

IT was Sunday, and a clear, frosty morning of midwinter. Trove had risen early and was walking out on a long pike that divided the village of Hillsborough and cut the waste of snow, winding over hills and dipping into valleys, from Lake Champlain to Lake Ontario. The air was cold, but full of magic sunfire. All things were aglow—the frosty roadway, the white fields, the hoary forest and the mind of the beholder. Trove halted, looking off at the far hills. Then he heard a step behind him and, as he turned, saw a tall man approaching at a quick pace. The latter had no overcoat. A knit muffler covered his throat, and a satchel hung from a strap on his shoulder.

"What ho, boy!" said he, shivering. "I'll follow thee a month, devise with thee where thou shalt rest that thou may'st hear of us an' we o' thee. What o' thy people an' the filly?"

"All well," said Trove, who was delighted to see the clock tinker, of whom he had thought often. "And what of you?"

"Like an old clock, sor—a weak spring an' a bit slow. But, praise God, I've yet a merry gong in me. An' what think you, sor, I've traveled sixty miles an' tinkered forty clocks in the week gone."

"I think you yourself will need tinkering."

"Ah, but I thank the good God here is me home," the old man remarked wearily.

"I'm going to school here," said Trove, "and hope I may see you often."

"Indeed, boy, we'll have many a blessed hour," said the tinker. "Come to me shop; we'll talk, meditate, explore, an' I'll see what o'clock it is in thy country."

They were now in the village, and, halfway down its main thoroughfare, went up a street of gloom and narrowness between dingy workshops. At one of them, shaky and gray with the stain of years, they halted. The two lower windows in front were dim with dirt and cobwebs. A board above them was the rude sign of Sam Bassett, carpenter. On the side of the old shop was a flight of sagging, rickety stairs. At the height of a man's head an old brass dial was nailed to the gray boards. Roughly lettered in lampblack beneath it were the words, "Clocks Mended." They climbed the shaky stairs to a landing, supported by long braces, and whereon was a broad door with latch and keyhole in its weathered timber.

"All bow at this door," said the old tinker as he put his long iron key in the lock. "It's respect for their own heads, not for mine," he continued, his hand on the eaves that overhung below the level of the door top.

They entered a loft open to the peak and shingles, with a window in each end. Clocks, dials, pendulums and tiny cogwheels of wood and brass were on a long bench by the street window. Thereon also were a vise and tools. The room was cleanly, with a crude homelikeness about it. Chromos and illustrated papers had been pasted on the rough board walls.

"On me life, it is cold," said the tinker, opening a small stove and beginning to whittle shavings. "'Cold as a dead man's nose.' Be seated an' try—try to be happy."

There were an old rocker and two small chairs in the room.

"I do not feel the cold," said Trove, taking one of them.

"Belike, good youth, thou hast the rose of summer in thy cheeks," said the old man.

"And no need of an overcoat," the boy answered, removing the one he wore and passing it to the tinker. "I wish you to keep it, sir."

"Wherefore, boy? 'Twould best serve me on thy back."

"Please take it," said Trove. "I cannot bear to think of you shivering in the cold. Take it, and make me happy."

"Well, if it keep me warm an' thee happy it will be a wonderful coat," said the old man, wiping his gray eyes.

Then he rose and filled the stove with wood and sat down, peering at Trove between the upper rim of his spectacles and the feathery arches of silvered hair upon his brows.

"Thy coat hath warmed me heart already—thanks to the good God!" said he fervently. "Why so kind?"

"If I am kind, it is because I must be," said the boy. "Who were my father and mother I never knew. If I meet a man who is in need I say to myself, 'He may be my father or my brother; I must be good to him,' and if it is a woman I cannot help thinking that maybe she is my mother or my sister. So I should have to be kind to all the people in the world if I were to meet them."

"Noble suspicion, by the faith o' me fathers!" said the old man, thoughtfully rubbing his long nose. "An' have ye thought further in the matter? Have ye seen whither it goes?"

"I fear not."

"Well, sor, under the ancient law, ye reap as ye have sown, but more abundantly. I gave me coat to one that needed it more, an' by the goodness o' God I have reaped another an' two friends. Hold to thy course, boy. Thou shalt have friends an' know their value. An' then thou shalt say, 'I'll be kind to this man because he may be a friend,' an' love shall increase in thee an' around thee an' bring happiness."

There was a moment of silence, broken by the sound of a church bell.

"To thy prayers," said the clock tinker, rising, "an' I'll to mine. Dine with me at 5, good youth, an' all me retinoo—maids, warders, grooms, attendants—shall be at thy service."

"I'll be glad to come," said the boy, smiling at his odd host.

"An' see thou hast hunger."

"Good morning, Mr."— The boy hesitated.

"Darrel—Roderick Darrel," said the old man. "That's me name, sor, an' ye'll find me here at the Sign o' the Dial."

A wind came shrieking over the hills, and long before evening the little town lay dusky in a scud of snow mist. The old stairs were quivering in the storm as Trove climbed them.

"Welcome, good youth," said the clock tinker, shaking the boy's hand as he came in. "Ho, there, me servitors! Let the feast be spread!" he called in a loud voice, stepping quickly to the stove that held an upper deck of wood, whereon were dishes. "Right Hand, bring the meat, an' Left Hand, the potatoes, an' Quick Foot, give us thy help here."

He suited his action to the words, placing a platter of ham and eggs in the center of a small table and surrounding it with hot roast potatoes, a pot of tea, new biscuit and a plate of honey.

"Ho, Wit and Happiness, attend upon us here!" said he, making ready to sit down.

Then, as if he had forgotten something, he hurried to the door and opened it.

"Care, thou skeleton, go hence, and thou, Poverty, go also, and see thou return not before cockcrow," said he imperatively.

"You have many servants," said Trove.

"An' how may one have a castle without servants? Forsooth, boy, horses an' hounds an' lords an' ladies have to be attended to. But the retinoo is that run down ye'd think me home a hospital. Wit is a creeping dotard, and Happiness is in poor health an' can barely drag himself to me table, an' Hope is a tippler, an' Right Hand is getting the palsy. Alack, me best servant left me a long time ago!"

"And who was he?"

"Youth; lovely, beautiful Youth! But let us be happy. I would not have

"Please take it," said Trove.

him back—foolish, inconstant Youth, dreaming dreams an' seeing visions. God love ye, boy! What is thy dream?"

This rallying style of speech, in which the clock tinker indulged so freely, afforded his young friend no little amusement. His tongue had long obeyed the lilt of classic diction; his thought came easy in Elizabethan phrase. The slight Celtic brogue served to enhance the piquancy of his talk. Moreover, he was really a man of wit and imagination.

"Once," said the boy, after a little hesitation, "I thought I should try to be a statesman, but now I am sure I would rather write books."

"An' what kind o' books, pray?"

"Tales."

"An' thy merchandise be truth, capital!" exclaimed the tinker. "Hast thou an ear for tales?"

"I'm very fond of them."

"Marry, I'll tell thee a true tale, not for thy ear only, but for thy soul, an' some day, boy, 'twill give thee occupation for thy wits."

"I'd love to hear it," said the boy.

The pendulums were ever swinging, like the legs of a procession trooping through the loft, some with quick steps, some with slow. Now came a sound as of drums beating. It was for the hour of 8, and when it stopped the tinker began.

"Once upon a time," said he as they rose from the table and the old man went for his pipe—"'twas long ago, an' I had then the rose o' youth upon me—a man was tempted o' the devil an' stole money—a large sum—an' made off with it. These hands o' mine used to serve him those days, an' I remember he was a man comely an' well set up, an', I think, he had honor an' a good heart in him."

The old man paused.

"I should not think it possible," said Trove, who was at the age of certainty in his opinions and had long been trained to the uncompromising thought of the Puritan. "A man who steals can have no honor in him."

"Ho, Charity!" said the clock tinker, turning as if to address one behind him. "Sweet Charity, attend upon this boy. Mayhap, sir," he continued meekly, "God hath blessed me with little knowledge o' what is possible, but I speak of a time before guilt had soiled him. He was officer of a great bank—let us say in Boston. Some thought him rich, but he lived high an' princely, an' I take it, sor, his income was no greater than his needs. It was a proud race he belonged to—grand people they were, all o' them, with houses an' lands an' many servants. His wife was dead, sor, an' he'd one child—a little lad o' two years an' beautiful. One day the boy went out with his nurse, an' where farther nobody knew. He never came back. Up an' down, over an' across, they looked for him night an' day, but were no wiser. A month went by an' not a sight or sign o' him, an' their hope failed. One day the father he got a note—I remember reading it in the papers, sor—an' it was a call for ransom money—$100,000."

"Kidnaped!" Trove exclaimed, with much interest.

"He was, sor," the clock tinker resumed. "The father he was up to his neck in trouble then, for he was unable to raise the money. He had quarreled with an older brother, whose help would have been sufficient. Well, God save us all, 'twas the old story o' pride an' bitterness! He sought no help o' him. A year an' a half passes an' a gusty night o' midwinter the bank burns. Books, papers, everything is destroyed. Now the poor man has lost his occupation. A week more an' his good name is gone. A month an' he's homeless. A whisper goes down the long path o' gossip. Was he a thief an' had he burned the records o' his crime? The scene changes, an' let me count the swift, relentless years."

The old man paused a moment, looking up thoughtfully.

"Well, say ten or mayhap a dozen passed, or more or less it matters little. Boy an' man, where were they? Oh, the sad world, sor! To all that knew them they were as people buried in their graves. Think o' this drowning in the flood o' years—the stately ships sunk an' rotting in oblivion. Some word of it, sor, may well go into thy book."

The tinker paused a moment, lighting his pipe, and after a puff or two went on with the tale.

"It is a winter day in a great city. There are buildings an' crowds an' busy streets an' sleet in the bitter wind. I am there, an' me path is one o' many crossing each other like—well, sor, like lines on a slate, if thou wert to make 10,000 o' them an' both eyes shut. I am walking slowly, an' lo, there is the banker! I meet him face to face—an ill clad, haggard, cold, forgotten creature. I speak to him.

"'The blessed Lord have mercy on thee,' I said.

"'For meeting thee?' said the poor man. 'What is thy name?'

"'Roderick Darrel.'

"'An' I,' said he sadly, 'am one o' the lost in hell. Art thou the devil?'

"'Nay, this hand o' mine hath opened thy door an' blacked thy boots for thee often,' said I. 'Dost thou not remember?'

"'Dimly. It was a long time ago,' he answered.

"We said more, sor, but that is no part o' the story. Very well! I went with him to his lodgings—a little cold room in a garret—an' there, alone with me, he gave account of himself. He had shoveled an' dug an' lifted an' run errands until his strength was low an' the weight of his hand a burden. What hope for him? What way to earn a living?

"'Have courage, man,' I said to him. 'Thou shalt learn to mend clocks. It's light an' decent work, an' one may live by it an' see much o' the world.'

"There was an old clock, sor, in a heap o' rubbish that lay in a corner. I took it apart, and soon he saw the office of each wheel an' pinion an' the infirmity that stopped them an' the surgery to make them sound. I tarried long in the great city, an' every evening we were together in the little room. I bought him a kit o' tools an' some brass, an' we would shatter the clockworks an' build them up again until he had skill, sor, to make or mend.

"'Me good friend,' said he one evening after we had been a long time at work, 'I wish thou couldst teach me how to mend a broken life. For God's sake, help me! I am fainting under a great burden.'

"'What can I do?' said I to him.

"Then, sor, he went over his story with me from beginning to end. It was an impressive, a sacred confidence. Ah, boy, it would be dishonor to tell thee his name—but his story, that I may tell thee, changing the detail so it may never add a straw to his burden. I shall quote him in substance only an' follow the long habit o' me own tongue.

"'Well, ye remember how me son was taken,' said he. 'I could not raise the ransom, try as I would. Now, large sums were in me keeping an' I fell. I remember that day. Ah, man, the devil seemed to whisper to me. But, God forgive, it was for love that I fell. Little by little I began to take the money I must have an' cover its absence. I said to meself, some time I'll pay it back—that ancient sophistry o' the devil. When me thieving had gone far an' near its goal the bank burned. As God's me witness I'd no hand in that. I weighed the chances an' expected to go to prison—well, say, for ten years at least. I must suffer in order to save the boy an' was ready for the sacrifice. Free again, I would help him to return the money. That burning o' the records shut off the prison, but opened the fire o' hell upon me. Half a year had gone by an' not a word from the kidnapers. I took a note to the place appointed—a hollow log in the woods a bit east of a certain bridge on the public highway twenty miles out o' the city—but no answer, not a word, not a line, up to this moment. They must have relinquished hope an' put the boy to death.

"'In that old trunk there under the bed is a dusty, molding, cursed heap o' money done up in brown paper an' tied with a string. It is $100,000 an' the price o' me soul.'

"'An' thou in rags an' a garret,' said I.

"He drew out the trunk an' showed me the money, stacks of it, dirty an' stinking o' damp mold.

"'There it is,' said he, 'every dollar I stole is there. I brought it with me an' over these hundreds o' miles I could hear the tongue o' gossip. Every night as I lay down I could hear the whispering of all the people I ever knew. I could see them shake their heads. Then came this locket o' gold.'

"A beautiful, shiny thing it was, an' he took out of it a little strand o' white hair an' read these words cut in the gleaming case:

"Here are silver and gold,
The one for a day o' remembrance between thee an' dishonor,
The other for a day o' plenty between thee an' want.

"It was an odd thought an' worth keeping, an' often I have repeated the words. The silvered hair, that was for remembrance, an' the gold he might sell an' turn it into a day o plenty.

"'In the locket was a letter,' said the poor man. 'Here it is,' an' he held it in the light o' the candle. 'See, it is signed "Mother."'

"An' he read from the letter words o' sorrow an' bitter shame an' firm confidence in his honor.

"'It ground me to the very dust,' he went on. 'I put the money in that bundle, every dollar. I could not return it an' so confirm the disgrace o' her an' all the rest. I could not use it, for if I lived in comfort they would ask—all o' them—whence came his money? For their sake I must walk in poverty all me days. An' I went to work at heavy toil, sor, as became a poor man. As God's me judge, I felt a pride in rags an' the horny hand.'"

The tinker paused a moment, in which all the pendulums seemed to quicken pace, tick lapping upon tick, as if trying to get ahead of each other.

"Think of it, boy," Darrel continued. "A pride in rags an' poverty. Bring that into thy book an' let thy best thinking bear upon it. Show us how patch an' tatter were for the poor man as badges of honor an' success.

"'I thought to burn the money,' me host went on. 'But no; that would have robbed me o' one great possibility—that o' restoring it. Some time, when they were dead, maybe, an' I could suffer alone, or when some lucky chance might come to me, I would restore the money, but I could not find the owners of it. Day an' night these slow an' heavy years it has been here, cursing an' accusing me.

"'I lie here o' nights thinking. In that heap o' money I seem to hear the sighs an' sobs o' the poor people that toiled to earn it. I feel their sweat upon me, an', God, this heart o' mine is crowded to bursting with the despair o' hundreds! An', betimes I hear the cry o' murder in the cursed heap as if there were some had blood upon it. An' then I dream it has caught fire beneath me, an' I am burning raw in the flame.'"

The tinker paused again, crossing the room and watching the swing of a pendulum.

"Boy, boy," said he, returning to his chair, "think o' that complaining, immovable heap lying there like the blood of a murder! An' thy reader must feel the toil an' sweat an' misery an' despair that is in a great sum, an' how it all presses on the heart o' him that gets it wrongfully.

"'Well, sor,' the poor fellow continued, 'now an' then I met those had known me, an' reports o' me poverty went home. An' those dear to me sent money, the sight o' which filled me with a mighty sickness, an' I sent it back to them. Long ago, thank God, they ceased to think me a thief, but only crazy. Tell me, man, what shall I do with the money? There be those living I have to consider, an' those dead an' those unborn.'

"'Hide it,' said I, 'an' go to thy work, an' God give thee counsel.'"

Man and boy rose from the table and drew up to the little stove.

"Now, boy," said the clock tinker, leaning toward him with knitted brows, "consider this poor thief who suffered so for his friends. Think o' these good words, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' If thou shouldst ever write of it, thy problem will be to reckon the good an' evil an' give each a careful estimate an' him his proper rank."

"What a sad tale!" said the boy thoughtfully. "It's terrible to think he may be my father. Please tell me when was the boy taken."

"Time or name or place I cannot tell thee lest I betray him," said the old man. "Neither is necessary to thy tale. Keep it with thee awhile. Thou art young yet an' close inshore. Wait until ye sound the farther deep. Then, sor, write, if God give thee power, an' think chiefly o' them in peril an' about to dash their feet upon the stones."

For a moment the clocks' ticking was like the voice of many ripples washing the shore of the infinite. A new life had begun for Trove, and they were cutting it into seconds. He looked up at them and rose quickly and stood a moment, his thumb on the door latch. Outside they could hear the rush and scatter of the snow.

"Poor youth!" said the old man. "Thou hast no coat—take mine. Take it, I say. It will give thee comfort an' me happiness."

He would hear no refusal, and again the coat changed owners, giving happiness to the old and comfort to the new.

Then Trove went down the rickety stairs and away in the darkness.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

PETER'S GREAT CONFESSION

Sunday School Lesson for June 10, 1906

Specially Prepared for This Paper.

LESSON TEXT.—Matt. 16:13-28; Memory verses 24, 25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God."—Matt. 16:16.

TIME.—Autumn A. D. 29, soon after the last lesson.

PLACE.—About 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.—Foundation Stories: (1 Pet. 2:1-10; see 1 Cor. 3:10-17; Rev. 21:19, 20; Isa. 28:16, 17; Eph. 2:20, etc. The word "church": Matt. 18:17; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 15:3; Rom. 16:5; Eph. 5:24-32; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 2:1, etc. "Hades": Acts 2:27, 31; Luke 16:23; Matt. 11:23; Rev. 1:18, etc. Distinguish it from "Gehenna": Matt. 5:22; Jas. 3:6, etc. Cross-bearing: Matt. 10:38, 39; Gal. 6:14; Heb. 12:2; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20, etc.

Comment and Suggestive Thought.

V. 13. "When Jesus came." When in his journeying in northern Palestine he reached this point. Where he came from, is not stated. "The coasts" ("parts"). The near villages. "Asked his disciples." When he was walking with them after a season of prayer (Luke 9:18).

V. 14. "Some say . . . John the Baptist." Herod, probably also his court, held this opinion. "Some Elias." Elijah had been translated (2 Kings 2:11), and there was among the Jews an expectation, founded on the prophecy of Mal. 4:5, that he would return. "Jeremias." Jeremiah. "One of the prophets." Some other one of the ancient prophets.

V. 15. "Whom say ye?" The emphasis should be placed on ye. What others think of Christ is a matter of little moment to us, compared with our own opinion of him.

V. 16. "Simon Peter answered." He, as the most ready speaker of the company, spoke for all. "Thou art the Christ." He declares the firm conviction that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One, promised by God. "Christ" is the Greek term, "Messiah," the Hebrew word: both meaning "Anointed." "The Son." Not merely a son, a member of the human race, but the Son—the true Son as corresponding exactly in character with the Father; one with God.

V. 17. "Blessed." Happy.

V. 18. "Thou art Peter," upon this rock." To appreciate the nice play of words, we must recollect that Peter means rock. Jesus had added Peter to his previous name Simon, giving in the name a divine prophecy that the fickle, vacillating man would, in time, be transformed into a rock-like character. In this great confession, we see this new character manifested. "Upon this rock I will build my church." Faith in Jesus as the visible expression of God's character, is the rock upon which Christ builds his church. In various places in Scripture, as here, the church is spoken of as a building of which Christ is "the chief corner stone," the apostles and prophets "foundation stones."

V. 19. "Keys of the kingdom." This, as part of the commission, relates not to Peter alone, but to the company of apostles. Jesus thus gave them authority to teach the truths of his kingdom.

V. 20. "They should tell no man." It would be better that all should learn to know and value Jesus for his real worth, until at length, like the apostles, they came to know for themselves that he was the Christ.

V. 21. "From that time forth." Jesus had given early hints of his sufferings, but from this time he began to tell plainly that the way to his kingdom was the way of love—of complete self-giving.

V. 23. "Get thee behind me, Satan." Jesus finds Peter being used by the prince of evil, that old enemy who had presented the same temptation to him in the wilderness, when he offered to give him the kingdom without the cross, if he would fall down and worship him.

V. 24. "If any . . . will come after me." Be like me. "Let him deny himself." Forget himself in living for God and fellow-men. "And take up his cross." Be ready in this loving spirit to suffer and die for others, as I have chosen to do.

V. 25. "Whosoever will." Whoever determines to make this his first aim. "Save his life." Secure ease and pleasure during the present life. "Shall lose it." Shall lose his higher spiritual life; lose the blessedness of self-giving; self-giving is living.

V. 26. "Gain the whole world." Obtain all the satisfaction that can possibly flow from the possession of wealth and worldly distinction.

V. 27. "For." This great balancing of accounts is not a mere figure of speech, but will actually occur.

V. 28. "Some . . . not taste death, till they see . . . kingdom." The fulfillment of this has by some been applied to the scene of Transfiguration; which three of Jesus' hearers witnessed within a week.

V. 14. Christ is as sadly misunderstood to-day as when he walked on the earth.—1 Tim. 4:1.

Practical Points.

V. 17. True views of Jesus Christ are implanted by God in the human heart.—1 Cor. 12:3.

V. 18. Placing faith in Christ as the visible expression of God's character is laying the foundation-stone of true religion.—1 Cor. 3:11.

V. 24. Being a Christian is being at heart as Christ was.—John 13:15.

V. 25. Self-forgetfulness in love for others is the heart of Christianity.—Rom. 13:10.

V. 26. We cannot afford to lose the heart-life for anything else.—Luke 12:23.

Sally Schreech (at the piano)—I'm afloat! I'm a-float.

Her Father—By Jove! You'd jolly soon be capsized if you were met by such a squall at that.—Tatler.

Minstress—You wish to take your notice, Jane. This is very sudden, isn't it?

Jane (blushingly)—Oh, no; Mum I've known 'im three days!—Punch.